

VZCZCXYZ0005
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #0688/01 0850910
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 260910Z MAR 07
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4620
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6527
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 7769

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000688

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - LLOYD NEIGHBORS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS, IRAQ, JAPAN'S
RELATIONS WITH CHINA

¶11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused new coverage March 24-26 on a TV debate held Saturday among three DPP presidential hopefuls vying for the party's presidential candidacy in 2008; on the alleged scandal involving the privatization of the Taiwan Television Enterprise; and on other local issues. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," on the other hand, devoted its entire page three March 26 to discussing the undesirable consequences Taiwan has suffered as a result of exporting its agricultural crop seeds and agricultural technology to China.

¶12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-status quo "China Times" discussed the DPP's debate among its presidential hopefuls Saturday. The article pointed out the DPP aspirants' unanimous position of not continuing to keep the "Four Nos" pledge that President Chen Shui-bian made to the United States, if they are elected president in 2008, and said it remains to be seen how this topic will develop in the near future. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post," on the other hand, commented on the war in Iraq and said "Iran is the obvious winner [of the war], without costing a cent and a soldier." A separate "China Post" editorial focused on Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's remarks on the "comfort women" during World War II. The article said Abe's remarks greatly offended South Korea, China, and Taiwan and he may "have dampened the prospects for a summit with President George W. Bush in Washington at the end of April after he meets with Wen Jiabao in Tokyo." End summary.

¶13. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

"Has the [DPP] Debate Set the Tone for the Green Camp's Campaigning Leitmotif?"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (3/26):

"In an attempt to vie for their party's nomination [for the 2008 presidential election], three bigwigs of the ruling party have started their warm-up via the debate hosted by the Taiwan Society Saturday. Even though this debate was for the Green camp's internal consumption, to a certain extent it could still constrain the campaigning style of the ruling party's presidential candidate for 2008. ...

"[The debate] turned more interesting when it comes to [the bigwigs'] statements of their positions toward the 'Four Nos and One Without' pledge. When asked whether they will reiterate the 'Four Nos and One Without' pledge to the United States, the three bigwigs - Yu Shyi-kun, Su Tseng-chang, and Frank Hsieh - all noted unanimously that they 'will not promise [to do so],' with the only difference lying in the strength of how they said it. This development delivered a very important message: namely, it seems

that the Green camp's toleration of the 'Four Nos and One Without' will come to an end when Bian finishes his term of office -- a situation that obviously differs from Washington's perspective. It is true that during his term of office, Bian has never abandoned the attempt to get rid of the constraints of the 'Four Nos and One Without.' But the fact is that neither has Washington ever loosened the 'incantation crown' that it placed upon Taiwan regarding this issue. [Editorial note: this is a literary allusion to "Journey to the West," in which the Monkey King Sun Wukong wore a crown on his head that the Buddhist monk Xuan Zang could tighten painfully by chanting an incantation. He used this crown to keep the mischievous monkey under control.] Bian was forced to clarify, immediately after he made the 'Four Wants and One Without' remarks, that what he said did not violate the 'Four Nos' pledge. The U.S. side has been very patient in chanting repeatedly the 'Four Nos and One Without' pledge, an evident move showing that Washington has always taken this pledge seriously and that it has never believed that this pledge would work on Bian alone. Now that the three bigwigs have all stated that they would not inherit such a 'pledge,' which is akin to stating that they would not adhere to such a pledge, it will be a whole new situation. It remains to be seen as to how the United States will react to this situation, but we are sure that this was definitely not the only time that these presidential hopefuls would declare their positions [over the pledge]. In the future, all these bigwigs will be asked repeatedly about this question, and it will not be easy for the United States to back off drastically from the bottom line of the 'Four Nos and One Without' pledge. It really deserves continuous monitoring as to how this topic will develop in this nationwide election. ..."

14. Iraq

"Who Is Winning in Iraq?"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/24):

"Four years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, what has the world learned from the costly war? Simply put, it seems to have proved the wisdom of the Chinese saying: 'Tyranny shall perish; aggression will be defeated.' The world has seen the demise of Saddam Hussein's tyranny, and the inevitable defeat of the U.S. invasion (aggression could be too harsh a word), a la Vietnam. Few would shed tears for Saddam's hanging, whose brutal rule of Iraq deserved the punishment. But George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq is ill-advised at best, and unjust at worst. Fighting terrorism is a just cause, but invading Iraq is not. ...

"Now, after four years, US\$800 billion in military spending, and 3,000 plus U.S. troops killed on Iraqi soil, who is the winner? Certainly not the United States. But the United States has won great victories for Iran, a long-time nemesis. Bush has vanquished Iran's two biggest enemies - the Taliban to the east and Saddam to the west. Now, Iran has become a superpower of sorts in the Middle East. Iran is so defiant as to call Bush's bluff in its nuclear confrontation with the United States. So bewildering and stupid is the Bush administration's policy on Iraq that a New York Times columnist called Dick Cheney an 'Iranian mole' in the White House, because the vice president has Bush's ear on Iraq. The war is not over yet. For now at least, Iran is the obvious winner, without costing a cent and a soldier."

15. Japan's Relations with China

"Abe Shows Silence Is Golden"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/26):

"Shinzo Abe, Japanese prime minister, said again there is no proof of coercion in the recruitment of what the military euphemistically called comfort women. ... Abe may be just honest. But he should not have said so unless he wanted to strain relations between Japan and China, which he is trying hard to nurse back from a near freeze he inherited from his predecessor Junichiro Koizumi. Abe sidestepped the Yasukuni visit issue to disarm China to the extent that Beijing did not raise hell when he rammed through a new

education law stressing patriotism and upgraded the defense agency to the status of ministry. ...

"Abe's remarks greatly offended South Korea. Taipei protested, too. He may also have dampened the prospects for a summit with President George W. Bush in Washington at the end of April after he meets with Wen Jiabao in Tokyo. ..."

WANG